

Minnesota NRCS

"Conservation is ethically sound. It is rooted in our love of the land, our respect for the rights of others, our devotion to the rule of law."
~Lyndon Baines Johnson



*WILLIAM HUNT,
STATE CONSERVATIONIST*

What's inside.....

State Conservationist Remarks	Page 1
Snake River Project	Page 2
ROCORI Area Children's Water Festival	Page 3
Prairie Woods Prairie Planting	Page 3
Care Packages for Iraq	Pages 3-4
Earth Day Celebration at Glacial Ridge	Page 5
Fitness	Page 6
Women in Agriculture	Page 6
Arbor Day Event	Page 6
Dry Hydrant Project and Pasture Updates	Page 7
Civil Servant of the Year Recognition	Page 8
Civil Rights update	Page 9
Area 6 Tour and CR History	Page 10
Health and Safety Committee	Pages 11-12
WRP 50,000 Acre Celebration	Pages 13-14
Area 4 Envirothon	Page 16
Area 1-7 Reports	Pages 17-23
Public Affairs	Page 23

As you read through this issue of Current Developments you will notice that Minnesota NRCS has had another busy but productive quarter!

Dana York, Associate Chief for NRCS participated in our 2006 annual Earth Day event at Glacial Ridge near Mentor, Minnesota. Once again these Earth Day activities brought people together to learn more about mother earth.

On May 15, 2006, in an event held near Albert Lea, Chief Bruce Knight joined us in celebrating our 50,000 acres of land voluntarily enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program in Minnesota. This milestone accomplishment was made possible by your dedicated conservation efforts, many private land-owners, and the excellent contributions of SWCD's and our many conservation partners.

Over the next few months we will have a lot to accomplish in a short period of time. Together we can make a difference for our many valued producers and customers here in Minnesota.

William Hunt

The Richard P Nelson Floodway Makes A Difference In Warren, Minnesota

The late Richard Nelson, Warren's former Mayor, worked tirelessly at the state and national level to advocate for the Snake River flood control project to protect his city. His efforts resulted in the approval and funding of the \$18 million project, in record time. The project is designed to protect Warren from flood damages, and although not complete, just saved the City from another devastating flood.

The residents of Warren have endured numerous floods throughout their history. In 1996 and 1997 alone the city suffered three major floods that caused \$12.7 million in damages. The effect of not having the Snake River project in place during the spring of 2006 would have been a flood with a peak worse than the flood of 1997 which inundated much of the city and did extensive damage.

The Snake River Watershed Project consists of two main components, an excavated floodway around the city of Warren, and a floodwater storage impoundment located 10 miles upstream of the city. The floodwater storage impoundment was needed to ensure that flood levels would not be increased either downstream or upstream of the floodway diversion structure currently under construction in Warren.

The impoundment and floodway channel are complete. However the diversion structure above the city which directs water to the floodway is incomplete and allowed water to flow around it. Emergency sandbagging prevented any serious damage; however the water would have been three to four feet deeper without the project. That depth would have caused major damage in the city.

The sponsors of the project are the Middle Snake Tamarack Rivers Watershed District and the city of Warren. Engineering and funding for the flood control components of the project were provided by the USDA-

NRCS under the Public Law 566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. The local sponsors were responsible for purchasing right-of-way, installing road crossings, contracting for the construction and future operation and maintenance.

It is expected that all of the final work on the floodway diversion structure will be completed during the summer of 2006. The flood diversion channel, which routes floodwaters of the Snake River around the town, has been named the Richard P. Nelson Floodway in his honor.

For more information about the Snake River Project, please contact, John Brach, State Engineer at (651)-602-7880 or via e-mail at: john.brach@mn.usda.gov



Aerial view of the floodwater storage impoundment
Photo by Bob Kliner

ROCORI Area Children's Water Festival

The ROCORI Area Children's Water Festival was held on Friday May 12th in Cold Spring Minnesota. 4th grade students from area elementary schools spent the day learning and playing games related to water. There were eleven stations featuring different aspects of water including groundwater, fish and lake management, erosion, and macro-invertebrates, to name a few. Natural resource professionals from a variety of different agencies and organizations spent the day presenting their topics to ten groups of students in 20 minute intervals.

Among the presenters was Jaime Schaunaman, NRCS Soil Conservationist, and Greg Berg, SWCD Shoreland Specialist, both from the Waite Park field office. Their station dealt with erosion and water quality. The students played a game called "Just Passing Through", where they got to portray rocks, vegetation, and raindrops. After the game, the students gathered around for a demonstration to see how runoff differed in amount and clarity between the three types of ground cover; bare soil, permanent vegetation and an erosion control blanket. The students had a great time and learned a lot between the game and the hands-on demonstration.

The ROCORI Area Children's Water Festival is coordinated by the cities of Cold Spring, Rockville and Richmond Wellhead Protection Committees.



Students learn what type of ground cover is best for preventing erosion and protecting water quality during a rain event; bare soil, permanent vegetation or an erosion control blanket. Photo by Jaime Schaunaman.

Prairie Woods Prairie Planting Project by Lynetta V. Cleveland, Soil Conservationist Willmar, MN

In early August 2005, I attended Plant Materials Training at the Plant Materials Center in Bismarck, North Dakota. I expected to learn about various grasses and shrubs of the Midwest. However, I was pleasantly surprised to learn so much more than that and I left the center with a greater appreciation of the role plants play in the environment and with the desire to incorporate more plants into the landscape of Minnesota.

Upon returning to Willmar, I solicited the help of other individuals and started planning a demonstration planting. Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center was chosen as an ideal site for the planting because thousands of people visit the learning center each year.

During May of 2006, 15 species of various plants from the Plant Materials Center were delivered. A group of seven volunteers representing each of the project partners, and I hand planted approximately 120 seedlings in sod chunks including Big Bluestem, Indian grass, Cup plant, Prairie Sandreed, and Stiff Sunflower. After one month, the plants have become established and others have expressed interest in such projects.

Care Packages for Iraq by Noel Frank, DC Owatonna, Minnesota

Friends,
Some of you have expressed an interested in either sending cards or care packages to James Smith, Soil Conservation Technician in the Owatonna field office, while he is over seas. This will be his address:

SGT Smith, James E.
B 1-125 Strike
Unit #60000
APO AE 09372-0000

Jim would love to hear from any of you, but don't look for a note back anytime soon as he has only written to me twice since he has been in Mississippi.

Area 5 Care Packages by Cal Dunblazer

NRCS & SWCD Employees:

We are again collecting items to be sent to soldiers overseas. Since the return of the Marshall Unit of the MN National Guard from Iraq we have had no candidates. Thank you all for your generous donations to all of our candidates.

We do have some new candidates that we will be supporting.

1st Lieutenant Daniel A. Davis arrived in Kuwait in October 2005 in preparation for deployment to Iraq. It is anticipated that LT Davis will be sent to Iraq soon. LT Davis serves with Company "A", 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry of the Wisconsin Army National Guard from Ft. Atkinson WI. Prior to their Kuwait deployment the unit assisted with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts in Mississippi. Daniel Davis is Sandy Jerzak's brother.

Suggested Items:

Christian Music, Artist Materials, Chess, Coffees. Dan likes to read about Saltwater Fish and Corals.

Joe Douty

Civilian Profession: Manufacturing Business

Date Arrived in Iraq: May 2006

Job Duty: Civil Affairs

Unit: "A" Btry 1-125th Field Artillery, (National Guard) Pipestone, Minnesota. Assigned to the 34th Inf. Div.

Suggested Items: Any Sports Related Items, Golf, Basketball, Baseball, Hand Games, Gatorade, Lemonade, Beef Jerky, and Licorice.

Joe Douty's Address:
SSG Douty, Joseph L



Charles Halfmann

Date Arrived in Iraq:

May 1, 2006

Job Duty: Security &

Convoy Support

Unit: "B" Btry 1-125st

Field Artillery, (National

Guard) Luverne,

Minnesota. Assigned to

the 34th Inf. Div.



Suggested Items: Movies-DVD, Hunting & Fishing Magazines, Beef Jerky, and Juices. Travis has a laptop computer and X-Box.

Travis' Address:

SPC Halfmann, Charles,

T B/1-125th Strike CSC SCANIA APO AE 09331-0000

Thank You for Your Support of Our Soldiers

Cal

Glacial Ridge Sets the Scene for an Earth Day Celebration by Julie MacSwain

The Earth Day celebration at Glacial Ridge Project started early on April 21st with the viewing of one of nature's greatest spectacles, the male Prairie Chicken putting on an elaborate dance to attract the female Prairie Chicken. Dana York, Associate Chief for NRCS, William Hunt, State Conservationist, MN and several other NRCS employees took the opportunity to view those Prairie Chickens!



An Earth Day program began at 9:40 a.m. with Dana York, William Hunt and Congressman Collin Peterson serving as the speakers. One hundred twenty 6th grade students from Crookston and Red Lake Falls schools, along with guests from throughout the State participated in the event. Hunt said, "Every day is earth day in rural America." He also expressed his appreciation for the community's participation in the event.

Dana York encouraged the 6th grade students that attended the Glacial Ridge event to consider going into Natural Resources for a career. York shared with the students that it was earth day in 1970 that initiated her interest in a career path in natural resources!

The 6th grade students participated in environmental learning stations, including discussions on: Prairie Prescribe Burns, Waterfowl identification, Wetlands, Web of life, Water Experiment and prairie Wildlife.



*Wes Drake,
Engineer from
Glacial Ridge
served as
instructor*

The Earth Day ceremony took place between 10:30 a.m and noon. Dana York reminded the audience of the importance of outcomes with conservation. "Projects such as Glacial Ridge are important because of the partnerships and leveraging of dollars that occur." Glacial Ridge was highlighted at the recent White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation Partnerships. "The best projects start from the bottom and go up," said York.

In August 2000 The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased 24,270 acres east of Crookston, Minnesota. This set the stage for the largest tall grass prairie/wetland restoration in history. NRCS worked with TNC, private landowners, USFWS, Ducks Unlimited (DU) and over 30 other partners to plan and implement this massive project. NRCS utilized funds from its Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) for easement and restoration activities.

To date, The Nature Conservancy has enrolled 13,500 acres into the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). This includes the fourth easement with TNC covering 1276 acres that is currently out for closing. TNC was also funded in 2005 for a fifth easement on 1416 acres, with a closing planned for later in 2006.

The April 21, 2006 Earth Day event was the third annual Earth Day celebrations by NRCS in Minnesota. Gathering people together to learn and celebrate our natural resources is the right thing to do. A special thank you to Greg Bengtson, Glacial Ridge Project Manager and Melissa Behrens, Soil Conservationist for their extra effort in planning this Earth Day Events. Events such as the one held at Glacial Ridge provide positive exposure for NRCS and its conservation partnership.



L-R William Hunt, State Conservationist; Collin Peterson, Congressman, Dana York, NRCS Associate Chief and Wally Sparby, Staff person for the Congressman.

NRCS employees Bill Lorenzen and Jim Jirik both completed Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota June 17th. This was Bill's 14th marathon and his 7th appearance at Grandma's Marathon. This was Jim's second consecutive completion of Grandma's Marathon. Congratulations, Bill and Jim for a job well done!



Bill Lorenzen, NRCS State Office Biologist and William Hunt, State Conservationist reminisce on Bill's recently completed Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota

Women in Agriculture By Sonia Maassel Jacobsen

A reception was held at the Governor's Residence in St. Paul on Tuesday, June 20, 2006, to honor women in agriculture. Speakers at the event included Lt. Governor Carol Molnau, MN Commissioner of Agriculture Gene Hugoson, and the President of American Agri-Women Yvonne Erickson, who resides near Battle Lake, MN. NRCS was represented by Debe Walchuk, Outreach Coordinator, Bemidji, and Sonia Maassel Jacobsen, Hydraulic Engineer, St. Paul.



Arbor Day in the State Office Submitted by Ginger Kopp, Staff Forester

This year's Arbor Day celebration, on April 28th in the state office, centered on our everyday connection to trees. Just like in the TV show "Numbers" which announces "We use math every day," we also use trees every day, whether we know it or not. We use tree products when we brush our teeth: the box, tube, cap, paste, brush handle and sometimes the bristles are all made of wood products, which include resin, cellulose, lignin and flavoring.

While most people know plastic is petroleum based; it would remain a fluid if not for the resin, cellulose and lignin that provide structure and form. Your computer monitor base, keyboard, mouse and CD cases would not exist if not for wood. Also your phone, pen shafts, coffee makers and plastic drinking cups contain tree products.

How about rubber products? The rubber plant is a tree found in Asia and India. So start looking at your rubber soles on shoes, slippers and boots, rubber in your vehicle tires, pencil erasers and chewing gum. Wood is used in furniture, boat trim, house framing, hair brushes, home accessories, photo frames, baskets and much more.

The state office staff learned about wood identification, which wood is used in what products and how many wood products are used in a typical morning routine (over 40!). They also learned about a scourge of the local woods, an invasive plant called giant knotweed. Barb Nesbitt has been trying to eradicate this harmful plant from her neighborhood for years.

So don't take wood for granted. You have been using it from your diapers to your mp3 player and will probably be buried in it. Sustainable management of our forests, woodlands and timber ensures that future generations can have the same, even more, benefits than we have from our woods. Did I mention medicines, food, tree swings, shade, wildlife habitats, clean water...?

Statewide Dry Hydrant Project by Randy Nelson

The MN Association of RC&D Councils will be receiving \$150,000 in grant funding to plan and implement a state-wide dry hydrant project. The funds provided through the DNR Firewise Community Grant Program will be used to plan and implement 85 dry hydrant projects in eight Minnesota RC&D areas.

Prairie Country RC&D headed up the proposal and through the grant will receive funds to install 23 hydrants throughout the Prairie Country area in 2006. Dry hydrants are a non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in lakes, ponds and streams that provide a ready means of suction supply of water to the fire department tanker truck. Dry hydrants can improve fire fighting capabilities of rural fire departments, save fuel and reduce the cost of operations.

For more information about this program, please contact Randy Nelson at (320)-235-3540 or via e-mail at: randy.nelson@mn.usda.gov

NRCS contribution to Bison World by Julie MacSwain

NRCS Grazing Specialist, Howard Moechnig, recently had an article featured in the Jan/Feb/Mar 2006 issue of Bison World. Howard wrote an article on restoring and maintaining pastureland.

Hats off to Howard for sharing his technical knowledge with others. Howard was quoted as saying “These services are offered on a voluntary basis so there is no risk in asking for advice!”

Tour of an Established Grazing System by Diana Strain, Hiawatha RC&D

This year’s series of Pasture Workshops began on April 10, 2006 and are scheduled through June 26th. Topics have ranged from Planning a Managed Grazing System, Strategies for Maximizing Forage Production, Managing Sensitive Areas in Pastures and a Tour of an Established Grazing System.

On June 5, 2006 the “Tour of an Established Grazing System” was held at the Tom Kunz Farm in Kasson, Minnesota. Participants began by identifying plants in a grazing system. They then looked at the paddock system set up for rotational grazing, at the watering system over the entire farm, and they identified the sensitive areas of the pasture. Howard Moechnig, NRCS Grazing Specialist told participants how to winterize the animals each year. Howard related it back to the individual’s own farms. From foraging heights to forage mixes, cattle and sheep operators shared experiences and learned applicable tips for properly managing their pastures.



NRCS employee, Howard Moechnig (right side) shares his grazing passion with others.

Partners for this workshop effort included:

- ❖ Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.
- ❖ Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.
- ❖ Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ❖ Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
- ❖ Southeast Minnesota’s Sustainable Farming Association
- ❖ Land Stewardship Project
- ❖ Area 7 Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Four Minnesota NRCS Employees recognized for Civil Servant of the Year by Julie MacSwain

On Friday, May 5th, the Federal Executive Board of Minnesota rolled out its 29th Annual Civil Servant of the Year Awards Program at the Sheraton in Bloomington, Minnesota. Four Minnesota NRCS Employees were recognized at this event. Each year Minnesota NRCS employees have the opportunity to nominate their co-workers for this important recognition.

The Federal Employees of the Year Awards Program honors outstanding Minnesota Federal Employees who have demonstrated exceptional performance and dedication as public servants. It also honors Federal employees who have rendered voluntary time and service to the community in which they live.

The following Minnesota NRCS employees were recognized at the May 5th luncheon:

Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist – Operations, St Paul, Minnesota
Robert Joachim, Soil Conservation Technician, Preston, Minnesota
Cutrina Moreland, Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, St. Paul, Minnesota
Christina Papenfuss, Soil Conservation Technician, Caledonia, Minnesota

Ann English was recognized for her continued leadership efforts with the Minnesota NRCS Civil Rights Committee and her role in mentoring and leading by example in the workplace.

Robert Joachim was recognized for his service as a technician in Preston, Minnesota and his continued compassion to serve the customer in getting conservation applied on the land.

Cutrina Moreland was recognized for her leadership in both Outreach and the Earth Team Volunteer Program. In FY 2005, Minnesota achieved 89,616 hours for Earth Team Volunteers.

Christina Papenfuss was recognized for her role in the CSP program and in conservation application accomplishments in the Caledonia Field Office. Her extra effort enabled the Root Watershed to become the most successful CSP Watershed in 2005.

For additional information about this recognition program, please contact Charles Montgomery, State Administrative Officer at (651)-602-7858.

Congratulations, Ann English, Robert Joachim, Cutrina Moreland and Christina Papenfuss for being named the Federal Civil Servant of the Year!



L-R Ann English, Chris Papenfuss, Cutrina Moreland, Robert Joachim and William Hunt, State Conservationist joined the participants at the Federal Employees of the Year Awards Program.

Minnesota NRCS Civil Rights Update by Julie MacSwain

We have new representation in Minnesota NRCS in the arena of Civil Rights. In the last few months, several people have been named to some key positions. Lisa Buckner, DC from Glencoe, MN has been named as the Federal Women's Program Manager for MN NRCS.



Lisa can be reached at the Glencoe Field Office by calling (320)-864-5177 or via e-mail at: lisa.buckner@mn.usda.gov

Information about the Federal Women's Program in Minnesota can

be obtained by viewing the following website: http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civil_rights/crftp.htm



Cutrina Moreland, Special Programs Coordinator and Earth team Volunteer Coordinator has been named the Multicultural Emphasis Program Manager. This new Special Emphasis Program Manager position will cover Asian, Disability and the Hispanic Special Emphasis program areas. Cutrina can be reached at the NRCS State office in St. Paul at (651)-602-7882 or via e-mail at: cutrina.moreland@mn.usda.gov

Debra Walchuk has been named the State Outreach Coordinator for MN NRCS. Debra will play a key role state-wide in Outreach activities. Debra's office will be located in Bemidji, Minnesota. Debra can be reached at (218)-751-1942 or via e-mail at: debra.walchuk@mn.usda.gov

Congratulations, Lisa, Debra and Cutrina in your new roles at NRCS!



Area 6 Conservation Tour

by Julie MacSwain

On June 14, 2006 the Minnesota NRCS Leadership Team participated in a Conservation Tour of Minnesota NRCS Area 6. Area 6 is comprised of a 13 county area in South Central Minnesota. Key players in coordinating this tour included: Kasey Taylor, ASTC-FO, Steve Becker, Area Engineer, Angie Paben-Pursifull, Area Administrative Coordinator and Shawn Weick, GIS Specialist.

The tour occurred the week that the Leadership Team had their week-long leadership team meeting. Tour stops included:

Orval Gartner, EQIP-Waste Storage Facility
Gary McCarthy, WRP
James Miller, CRP
Eagle Lake Rain Garden
Seven Mile Creek Park
Don Wenner, Controlled Drainage Project
Steve and Kerry Hoffman, EQIP Dairy Compost and Lime Flocculation
New Ulm Putting Green



Steve Becker, Area Engineer

Area 6 contains a high percentage of cropland which is in a corn and soybean crop rotation. Throughout the last several years, excellent progress has been made on getting more conservation on the land through a wide array of soil and water conservation practices. Area 6 has had numerous opportunities to work with the conservation partnership in the planning and successful implementation of getting conservation on the land. Tours are a great way of sharing the conservation story with others!

Notes on Civil Rights History From the MN NRCS Civil Rights committee

Approximately 42 years ago, the U.S. Congress passed what has become bedrock civil rights legislation. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and it became law in July of that year, concluding a legislative process that included a lengthy filibuster. Approximately a year earlier, during an address made prior to proposing the legislation, President Kennedy had stated:

“We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people... The heart of the question is whether all Americans are afforded equal rights and equal opportunities... this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts will not be fully free until all of its citizens are free.”

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 addresses voting rights, segregation in businesses and public places, and school desegregation. Title VI addresses nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs and Title VII constitutes the basic federal legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex.

One of many resources on the Web for learning more about the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/39.htm>

DO YOU HAVE BACK PAIN?

The field season is well underway and many of us have already been out to the field surveying, soil mapping or doing other conservation activities. Often back pain may be caused by improper use of tools or simply lifting and carrying equipment. Repetitive use of certain tools may also contribute to back pain now or possibly in the future.

An ergonomic friendly office workspace will minimize operator fatigue and discomfort. Having your chair, keyboard, monitor in the proper position while using correct posture will help to lessen any possible back pain.

What Is Back Pain?

Back pain is an all-too-familiar problem that can range from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp pain that leaves you incapacitated. It can come on suddenly – from an accident, a fall, or lifting something too heavy – or it can develop slowly, perhaps as the result of age-related changes to the spine. Regardless of how it happens or how it feels, you know it when you have it. And chances are, if you don't have it now, you will eventually. At some point, back pain affects an estimated 8 out of 10 people. It is one of our society's most common medical problems.

What Are the Risk Factors for Back Pain?

Although anyone can have back pain, a number of factors increase your risk. They include:

Age: The first attack of low back pain typically occurs between the ages of 30 and 40. Back pain becomes more common with age.

Fitness level: Back pain is more common among people who are not physically fit. Weak back and abdominal muscles may not properly support the

spine. "Weekend warriors" – people who go out and exercise a lot after being inactive all week – are more likely to suffer painful back injuries than people who make moderate physical activity a daily habit. Studies show that low-impact aerobic exercise is good for the discs that cushion the vertebrae, the individual bones that make up the spine.

Diet: A diet high in calories and fat, combined with an inactive lifestyle, can lead to obesity, which can put stress on the back.

Heredity: Some causes of back pain, including disc disease, may have a genetic component.

Race: Race can be a factor in back problems. African American women, for example, are two to three times more likely than white women to develop spondylolisthesis, a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine – also called the lumbar spine – slips out of place.

Occupational risk factors: Having a job that requires heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling, particularly when this involves twisting or vibrating the spine, can lead to injury and back pain. An inactive job or a desk job may also lead to or contribute to pain, especially if you have poor posture or sit all day in an uncomfortable chair.

Can Back Pain Be Prevented?

You may be able to avoid back pain by improving your physical condition and by learning and practicing proper body mechanics.

To keep your back healthy and strong:

Exercise: Regular low-impact aerobic activities — those that don't strain or jolt your back — can increase strength and endurance in your back and allow your muscles to function better. Walking and swimming are good choices. Talk with your doctor about which activities are best for you.

Build muscle strength and flexibility: Abdominal and back muscle exercises (core-strengthening exercises)

help condition these muscles so that they work together like a natural corset for your back. Flexibility in your hips and upper legs aligns your pelvic bones to improve how your back feels.

Quit smoking: Smokers have diminished oxygen levels in their spinal tissues, which can hinder the healing process.

Maintain a healthy weight: Being overweight puts strain on your back muscles. If you're overweight, trimming down can prevent back pain.

Use proper body mechanics:

Stand smart: Maintain a neutral pelvic position. If you must stand for long periods of time, alternate placing your feet on a low footstool to take some of the load off your lower back.

Sit smart: Choose a seat with good lower back support, arm rests and a swivel base. Consider placing a pillow or rolled towel in the small of your back to maintain its normal curve. Keep your knees and hips level.

Lift smart: Let your legs do the work. Move straight up and down. Keep your back straight and bend only at the knees. Hold the load close to your body. Avoid lifting and twisting simultaneously. Find a lifting partner if the object is heavy or awkward.

Sleep smart: People with back pain have commonly been told to use a firm mattress, but recent studies indicate that a medium-firm mattress might be better. Use pillows for support, but don't use a pillow that forces your neck up at a severe angle.

The following two web links were referenced and are excellent sources for additional information on back pain.

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal

and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)

<http://www.niams.nih.gov/hi/topics/pain/backpain.htm>

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/>

Search Back Pain for more information on treatment options.

Slide shows available:

- Core exercises
- Practice healthy posture
- Proper lifting techniques
- Daily back routine
- Proper sleeping positions
- Causes of Back Pain

Occupational Health & Safety E-News Safety Tips Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Life on the farm can pose many risks to children. So, with summer approaching check over these tips for an injury-free season.

- * No seat, no rider. Do not allow children to be extra riders on farm equipment, even if they are helping with chores.
- * Keep small children from playing on, in or under machinery or equipment. Provide an alternate safe-play area.
- * Know where children are before starting machinery and farm vehicles.
- * Train and closely supervise youth who will be operating farm machinery and equipment.
- * Keep ladders out of reach.
- * Keep small children away from large animals, particularly animals that have recently given birth.
- * Do not let children under age 12 operate an all-terrain vehicle.
- * Keep children from playing on, or in, silos and grain bins or wagons.
- * Do not leave children unsupervised around farm ponds or manure pits.
- * Hold monthly family farm safety review sessions.

For more farm safety tips, visit:

<http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us>.

50,000 Acres Enrolled in Wetlands Program Enrollment Part of Presidential Initiative



USDA NRCS's Chief, Bruce Knight made his 7th trip to Minnesota to join in the celebration of a major milestone achievement. Minnesota NRCS now has over 50,000 acres of wetlands enrolled in the national Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The Chief made this announcement at the property of Paula and Ranjit Bhagyan near Albert Lea, Minnesota.



*Ranjit Bhagyan,
hosted the WRP
event near Albert
Lea, Minnesota*

The announcement represents a portion of the nearly 500,000 acres that have been enrolled in Minnesota wetland restoration projects since 1994, making it one of the premier states in the nation with restoration activities. The Bhagyan's property where the WRP event was held has 175.2 acres enrolled in WRP and through this program the Bhagyan's have achieved several conservation outcomes.

The May 15th event which began at 10:00 a.m. included a nature walk, viewing of several agency and non-profit organization displays and a program that highlighted the 50,000 acre milestone accomplishment. Congressman Gil Gutknecht served as Moderator for the event.

STC William Hunt reminded the audience of the importance partnerships played in the success of WRP in Minnesota. Hunt acknowledged several conservation partners and individuals for their role in making conservation happen!

NRCS Chief Bruce Knight said we have many untold conservation stories. Stories such as the one today is important to tell. Programs such as WRP are good investments for our future generations.

At the conclusion of the program, two mallards were released by the MN Wildlife rehabilitation Center along with a ceremonial mounting of a duck box for the Bhagyan family.



Students from Glenville-Emmons and Sibley elementary school helped install wood duck nesting boxes at the WRP event.



L-R John Nicholson, ASTC-Rochester; Don Kropp, Freeborn SWCD; LeAnn Buck, MASWCD Executive Director; Obert Haldorson, Freeborn SWCD; William Hunt, State Conservationist and Bill Bryson, Retired Freeborn SWCD member.

Area 4 Envirothon By Jaime Schaunaman,
Soil Conservationist, Waite Park FO



NRCS Chief Bruce Knight gave his assistance in the mounting of the duck boxes!

Planning and implementing events such as the one that took place in Albert Lea on May 15th takes a great deal of time and effort on the part of many people. A special thank you to William Hunt, John Nicholson, Tim Koehler, Laurie Otte, Tim Wilson, Susan Ploetz, Kasey Taylor, Myron Taylor, Mark Oja, Ginger Kopp, Jim Axell, John Corrigan, Jean Sieben, Barbara Nesbitt, Julie MacSwain and the many other employees from Area 4, Area 6 and Area 7.



Jaime Schaunaman, a NRCS Soil Conservationist from the Waite Park field office, helped with the soils station this year by setting up, correcting tests, and cleaning up. The soil station is divided up into four substations, and five questions on the test relate to each substation.

30 teams total participated in the day's activities, with two teams being from Stearns County, both of which were from Albany High School.

Myron Taylor, District Conservationist, Albert Lea welcomed guests to the event!



Contact Information: Leanne Langeberg, Soil Conservation Technician
P: (218) 679-3959 x1317 - Fax: (218) 679-2830 -
leanne.langeberg@mn.usda.gov

Students in the Red Lake Watershed Participate in the 2006 Water Festival

The Red Lake Department of Natural Resources (Red Lake DNR), along with the support of NRCS & EPA, hosted the 2006 Water Festival for 5th grade students in the Red Lakes Watershed. The event was held Tuesday, May 2nd, 2006 at the Pine Tree Park in Blackduck, Minnesota. Students from Blackduck, Kelliher, Ponemah, and Red Lake attended the festival. The students participated in activities teaching them about impacts to their watershed and learned about ways to protect and conserve the natural resources where they live.

Fifteen presenters from the Red Lake DNR and the Beltrami County NRCS field office provided opportunities for students to participate in a wide variety of activities. The activities included three learning models, representing the relationship between pollution and watersheds, and topics involving soil and water, water wildlife, forestry and fire prevention.

The Water Festival is an annual event that is funded by an EPA Clean Water Act grant. The tribe utilizes this grant to manage the water resources in and around the Red Lake Reservation and to provide education opportunities to residents in the Red Lake watershed.

Personnel:

Congratulations to Clayton Schmitz on his selection and return to Area 1 as District Conservationist in the Ada FO.

Thane Espe, Soil Conservation Technician, transferred from the Hallock FO to the Warren FO.

Welcome to Josh Bork, Soil Conservationist, to the Bemidji FO.

Melissa Behrens, Glacial Ridge Soil Conservationist, has accepted the SCT position in Glenwood.

Debra Walchuk began her new duty as the Outreach Coordinator in Bemidji at the end of May.

Cheryl Stout, Misc. Assistant – Giziibii RC&D, Bemidji. Cheryl previously worked at Concordia language Village in Bemidji. Welcome to NRCS.

Michael Steinhauer, Soil Conservation Technician – Roseau FO. Michael transferred from the Breckenridge FO in Area 2.

Joe Van Hulle, Agricultural Engineer – A1 AO. Joe is a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and transferred from NRCS Wisconsin.

Congratulations to Jennifer Tepovich, Kevin Gietzen and Shannon Rasinski on their recent graduation from the University of MN – Crookston.

Matt Waterworth, Soil Conservationist – Warren FO, is leaving Area 1 and will begin work in the Preston FO July 10, 2006.

Shantel Spielmann, Soil Conservationist, transferred from the Bemidji FO to the Willmar FO effective May 28, 2006.

Congratulations:

Jenny Burrack, District Conservationist – McIntosh FO, delivered a baby girl on March 23, 2006.

Congratulations Jenny on newest addition to the family.

Awards:

Wayne Weber, Red Lake County SWCD, received a CD Clock Radio for recognition of 30 years of service to the District and support to the NRCS FO over the years.

Debra Walchuk, District Conservationist – Bagley FO, received a Travel mug for assisting the Bemidji FO during the Red Lakes CSP sign up.

Cari Rebischke, District Conservationist – Red Lake Falls, received a denim shirt for assisting the Bemidji FO during the Red Lakes CSP sign up.

Luther Newton, Soil Conservationist – Red Lake Falls, received a winter jacket for assisting the Bemidji FO during the Red Lakes CSP sign up.

Leanne Langeberg, Soil Conservation Technician – Red Lake, Krystal Story, Soil Conservation Technician – Bemidji, and Shantel Spielmann, Soil Conservationist – Bemidji, received winter jackets for helping support a successful CSP sign up in the Bemidji FO.

Kelly Voigt, Soil Conservation Technician – Baudette, Randy Huelskamp, District Conservationist – Crookston, and Cari Rebishcke, District Conservationist – Red Lake Falls received winter jackets for acting DC duties in neighboring counties during absences and vacancies.

Larry Voltz, District Conservationist – Bemidji, received a winter jacket for his leadership and hard work during the 2006 Red Lakes CSP sign up.



WRP going strong in Stevens County
by Jeff Hellermann, District Conservationist
Morris Field Office

Interest in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) remains high in 2006. This high interest resulted in 14 funded applications this year, totaling 2,041 acres and \$4 million. An additional 26 applications with about 3,000 acres are waiting for approval and funding.

Fiscal years 2003, 2004 and 2005 resulted in 33 easements, 3,272 acres and \$6.3 million. These numbers bring a large workload, from the application process all the way through final implementation. Thanks to the assistance from our Soil Conservation Technician Randy Schmiesing, Area Office Staff, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited employees, and State Office Staff, this workload is being accomplished.

Awards:

Cheryl Isder received two hats for becoming a certified Nutrient Management and Conservation Planner.

Darlene Drayna received a non-monetary awards for taking a very dedicated interest in using ArcGIS/ Toolkit and currently producing high quality products for CSP, EQIP, and CRP programs.

Greg Ostrowski, Todd Soil and Water Conservation District received a non-monetary award for being a great promoter of our EQIP program.

Terri Hodgins received a non-monetary award for assistance in creating a Web Soil Survey information pamphlet.

Karin Nordling received a non-monetary awards for assisting with putting together a Minnesota Web Soil Survey brochure.

Personnel Actions:

Richard Berscheid was reassigned to the Alexandria Field Office as a GS-7 Soil Conservationist.

Brent Gulbrandson received a promotion from a GS-7 SCT to a GS-8 SCT in Elbow Lake.

Jennifer Hansen received a promotion from a GS-5 Accounting Technician to a GS-6 Accounting Technician in the Fergus Falls Area Office.

Andrea Horsman was selected for the GS-5 SCT in Wheaton.

Lenore Marken received a promotion from a GS-9 Wetland Biologist to a GS-11 Wetland Biologist in the Fergus Falls Area Office.

Ron Spiering, Soil Conservationist from the Morris Field Office, will be transferring to the Goodhue Field Office effective June 25. Good Luck Ron and thanks for your assistance (especially 026 and 1026).

James Pendroy was reassigned to the Perham Field Office as a GS-5 Soil Conservationist.

Michael Steinhauer was reassigned to Area 1.

Ivan Reinke received a promotion from a GS-5 SCT to a GS-6 SCT in Wadena.

Michael Rokus was selected for the GS-11 Soil Scientist position in Baxter.

Randy Schmiesing's appointment was converted to a career-conditional appointment as a GS-6 SCT in Morris.

Cooperative Brushland Conservation: Keeping the Sharptails Dancing

By Russell Kleinschmidt, Soil Conservationist

In May of 1990, NRCS employees in northeastern Minnesota attended a training session on sharp-tailed grouse management by Bill Berg, a MN DNR Wildlife Biologist. As a result, brushland management projects with private landowners slowly began to develop. In March of 2003, a unique opportunity presented itself when MN DNR Wildlife coordinated brushland management projects on state land that surrounded private land. The private landowner was interested in participating in the project and it made biological and economic sense to manage the entire area as a unit. The landowner, NRCS, and MN DNR formulated a cooperative project using the WHIP and MN DNR private lands funds. This project became the first of many specially geared towards management of brushland habitat under both public and private ownership.

The sharptail projects are important since their population has been declining at an alarming rate for over the past half century and spurred the MN DNR to list them as a “species of special concern.” Bill Berg stated “The lack of fire, tree planting in open areas, extensive land clearing for agriculture, and recently dividing large tracts of land into small ones are primary causes of sharp-tailed grouse decline.”

The cooperation of NRCS, MN DNR, and private landowners has not only benefited sharptailed grouse. Bill Berg explained, “If you do everything right for sharptail habitat you will have the other brushland wildlife species too.” Up to 256 wildlife species utilize brushland in northeastern Minnesota and benefit from these projects.

According to Jodie Provost, MN DNR Private Lands Specialist, “Landowner interest has been high, and we can usually incorporate special interests such as food plots, wildlife openings, or allow land to be hayed or rotationally grazed.” Roche Lally, a project participant and president of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society has noticed a definite increase of sharp-tailed grouse numbers where projects have been completed.



The picture above illustrates a good brushland landscape. It is adjacent to one of the landowners participating in the cooperative sharp-tailed grouse management projects that benefit many brushland wildlife species.



Paul Sandstrom, DC, Duluth, looks over a pasture that is managed for both grazing and sharp-tailed grouse habitat. -Russell Kleinschmidt, May 2006

Personnel News

According to Jodie Provost, MN DNR Private Lands Specialist, "Landowner interest has been high, and we can usually incorporate special interests such as food plots, wildlife openings, or allow land to be hayed or rotationally grazed." Roche Lally, a project participant and president of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society has noticed a definite increase of sharp-tailed grouse numbers where projects have been completed.

Currently, there have been 29 cooperative projects on 1,970 acres of private lands. These projects have been very successful, and NRCS and MN DNR are looking into expanding the current priority areas to include additional sharp-tailed grouse habitat in Minnesota.

For more information, please check out:

- The sharp-tailed grouse wildlife guide sheet on the Minnesota NRCS website at <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/wild/guide.htm> and look forward to the new national NRCS Fish & Wildlife Management Leaflet No. 40 entitled "Sharp-tailed Grouse".
- "Brushland Dervishes" in the March-April 2006 issue of the Conservation Volunteer or online at www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/marapr06/brushland_dervishes.html.
- The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society at www.mnsharptails.org and MSGS brochure entitled "Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Management for Private Landowners."
- MDNR Private Lands Program at www.dnr.state.mn.us/privatelandsprogram/index.html.

Marty Rosek, Soil Scientist at the Center of Excellence, Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, accepted a soil scientist position in Wyoming. His reporting date was June 12, 2006. We wish Marty the best of luck in his future endeavors!

Timothy Amundson, Soil Scientist, joined the International Falls Soil Survey Office on June 12, 2006. Welcome aboard, Tim!

Gail Bong, a returning Soil Conservationist Student Trainee, is working at the Center of Excellence, Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Cloquet, MN. Welcome back, Gail!

Jennifer Mold, formerly a WAE at the Hinckley Field Office, was hired as a Soil Conservationist Student Trainee. She joined the Sandstone Soil Survey staff on June 12, 2006. Congratulations, Jennifer!

Mary Krueger, WAE at the Milaca Field Office, resigned to accept a position with an engineering firm. Best of luck, Mary!

Awards

Non-monetary award presented to Russell Kleinschmidt, Soil Conservationist, Duluth Field Office. Russell independently took on a leadership role in developing WHIP contracts for FY 2006. Congratulations, Russell!

On a personal note...

Congratulations to Russell Kleinschmidt and his new bride Jessica on the occasion of their wedding June 16, 2006. Best wishes!

Congratulations to Jessica Olson and her husband, Justin, on the birth of their son Gustav David (born June 15)!

AREA 4

**TIMOTHY A. WILSON, ASTC(FO)
BROOKLYN CENTER, MN**

Prescribed Fire Training

by Steve Sellnow, DC Waite Park, Minnesota

On March 25, 2006 Pheasants Forever hosted Prescribed burn training in Watkins, MN. The training was available through a partnership between the Stearns NRCS/SWCD, Stearns Pheasants Forever Chapter, Meeker Pheasants Forever Chapter and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR).

Thirty-six people attended the all day training and included people from PF Chapters, SWCD Offices and University of Minnesota Extension. Participants that attended the training gained a variety of information on CRP Mid-Contract Management, benefits of prescribed fire behavior, fire equipment, technique and safety.

Because of the increasing demand for Prescribed Burn through CRP Mid-Contract Management, this training helped answer the why's and how's of fire management and available funding to complete such management activities.

Instructors for the class were Tom Romaine (MN DNR Regional Staff Forester), Dennis Pederson (PF Habitat Specialist) and Jason Selvig (PF Farm Bill Biologist).



Personnel News

Riley Maanum, Soil Conservation Technician was reassigned from Waite Park to Foley effective April 30, 2006.

Gina Hugo, Sherburne SWCD, and her husband, Dan, recently welcomed the arrival of a baby boy on May 23, 2006. Congratulations to Gina and Dan on the new addition to their family!

April Hill, District Conservationist transferred from Waconia to Fayette, Alabama effective June 11, 2006.

Derrick Harmon, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist is assigned to the Jordan Field Office this summer. Derrick is a native of Lexington, Mississippi. He is a senior majoring in Agricultural Economics and Plant and Soil Science and will graduate in December 2006 from Alcorn State University.

Justin Lindner, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist is assigned to the Elk River Field Office this summer. He is a junior majoring in Biology at Bemidji State University.

Chee Lor, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist is assigned to the Farmington Field Office this summer. She has completed two years of school at the University of Wisconsin River Falls.

Hebe Bernardo, Engineer Student Trainee is assigned to the Brooklyn Center Area Office this summer. Hebe is from Quebradillas, Puerto Rico. She recently graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Hebe will begin her first year in Mechanical Engineering this fall at the University of Puerto Rico.

Sangeetha Gummadi, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist is assigned to the Brooklyn Center Area Office. She is a sophomore majoring in Agricultural Education at the University of Minnesota.

Lynette Horton, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist is assigned to the Waite Park Field Office this summer. Lynette is a native of Ebenezer, Mississippi. She is a senior majoring in Agricultural Economics and Plant and Soil Science. Lynette will graduate with a BS Degree in May 2007 from Alcorn State University.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Volunteers Recognized

Cottonwood SWCD and the NRCS appreciates the assistance they receive from volunteers at the Retired

Senior Volunteer Program. Without their help, the office in Windom would not achieve the amount of programs they do.



Some of the projects they have helped with are bagging trees for Arbor Day, answering phone, newsletter, putting coloring books together for the Water Festival, along with supplies for the exhibit hall, mapping, filing and recycling.

National Volunteer Week was held April 23-29 and this year's theme was "Inspire By Example", truly, this reflects how their countless acts of service are one of America's most valuable assets.

A celebration took place to honor and personally thank each of the volunteers at a continental breakfast. The event was fun and the volunteers enjoyed the recognition.

For more information about the volunteer program in Cottonwood County, please contact Cheryl Mathias at (507)-831-1153.

Length of Service Awards

40 years – Joseph Keller
35 years – Richard Giles
30 years – Paul Bridgland
30 years – Michael Appel

Nutrient Management Certification

Michael Appel
Steve Woltjer
James Ridler
Burton Hendrickson

Conservation Planner Certification

April Sullivan

Civil Rights Team/Group Award

Southwest Women's Day Committee

Spot Awards

Non-Monetary (Winter Coat)

Steven Woltjer, Brian Christiansen, and Joel Poppe for their assistance as Acting DC in the Windom FO.



Joseph Keller, Civil Engineering Technician, Montivideo FO received his 40 year Length of Service Award from William Hunt, State Conservationist.

Steve Avoids Gators



Steve Becker and Kris Davis, Wildlife Biologist, Addis, LA assess damages along Bayou La Loutre in St. Bernard Parish

On August 29, 2005, the gulf coast was overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina. It has been blamed for more than 1,577 deaths and the evacuation of over 1.1 million people. Eighty percent of New Orleans was flooded. Some areas were under 20 feet of water.

In New Orleans and surrounding parishes, Katrina severely damaged the hurricane protection system of levees, canals, and pumps that were constructed disjointedly since the 1920's. The Army Corps of Engineers has been working to repair 169 miles of the 350 miles of levees. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been working to repair the elaborate network of drainage canals.

Local units of government along the gulf coast asked for assistance through the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection program. An emergency operation center was opened in Madisonville, on the north side of Lake

Ponchatrain. It has been continuously staffed with about 20 specialists from around the country, who volunteered to assist Louisiana with this monumental repair effort. Drainage canals are plagued with sedimentation, debris, and slope failure.

Levees were designed to keep storm surges out, but they also hold rainwater in. An elaborate network of drainage canals move every drop of storm water runoff to pump stations. In the city of New Orleans, 22 pump stations and 60 pumps can manage 29 billion gallons of water every day (45,000 cfs). Jefferson Parish, adjacent to New Orleans, has 47 pump stations and 130 pumps that can move 35,000 cfs. These pump stations provide flood protection from a 10 year-24 hour storm.

Personnel:

The following employees received awards at the Area Meeting on May 17, 2006 in St. Peter, MN:

Ken Luttner - Serving as Acting ASTC (FO) with the continued direction and support of program activities within South Central Minnesota.

Clayton Schmidt - Serving as Acting District Conservationist at the Blue Earth Field Service Center and providing conservation assistance within Area 6.

Leah Duzy - Serving as Acting ASTC (FO) with the continued direction and support of program activities within South Central Minnesota.

Brenda Tonn - Development of the Area 6 program checklist to ensure applicant eligibility and or program compliance.

Charles Schwartz - Development of the Area 6 GIS tool.

**AREA 7
JOHN NICHOLSON, ASTC-(FO)
ROCHESTER, MN**

Senior Center passes volunteer Milestone by Julie MacSwain

The Rochester Senior Citizen Services have assisted with the USDA Newsletter for over 13 years in Rochester, Minnesota. These individuals have volunteered more than 1700 hours. During this 13 year time frame, they folded the newsletters, placed address labels and sorted the items by zipcode, four times per year handling over 12,000 newsletters/year.

Dave Copeland, DC, found out about these services through Sally Gallagher, Coordinator of Senior citizen Services. Dave worked closely with Sally to determine how the local Rochester Senior Citizens could become volunteers under the NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program. To this end, Dave was able to accomplish a TEAM USDA project which included, Extension Service, FSA, NRCS and Olmstead Soil and Water Conservation District.

The volunteer time from the local Senior citizens has saved USDA approximately \$34,000.



L-R Dave Copeland, District Conservationist, presented Hazle Robinson with a plaque for Rochester Senior Citizen Center. The Center volunteered more than 1,700 hours of volunteer service as a Group for 13 years!

Personnel:

Elizabeth Oolman, Agricultural Engineer from the Rochester Area Office and her husband welcomed their third child (boy) into the world on June 16th.

**The next issue of Current Developments
is due: September 15, 2006**

Send your articles to:

Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist
julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov

*Your contribution and continued readership of
Current Developments is appreciated!*